

Dick's Marathons

On moving to Dallas in 1975 I joined the Cooper Clinic to practice Preventive Medicine. This included joining the Aerobic Center where I met many amateur runners which stimulated my desire to join them. So, after having run short distances for a year, I moved up to longer runs, anticipating that I would eventually be running marathons. From then on, I would be running at least 40 miles a week with long runs on the weekends around White Rock Lake.

My first marathon was the Rice Bowl Marathon in Louisiana, a point to point race along the coast. I had carbo loaded, 3 days of fat and protein only, followed by 2 days of just carbos to super saturate the storage of calories for the race. Being a novice, I ate way too much carbo and put on 10 lbs. of water (stored with the glucose), and my ankles swelled as did the rest of my body. I figured that I would start the race slowly, as I felt pretty logy, and I would increase my pace as I ran off the water. Unfortunately, I ran off the water but I never recovered my strength. Still I ran a respectable 3:36.

Several months later, I qualified for the Boston Marathon by running a 3:20 in the Houston Marathon. The day of the marathon was miserable, it was muggy and the temperature was 96 degrees. What to do? One of our group, Wayne Jones, said to keep drinking water until we were urinating every 5 minutes. We followed that instruction. I don't know whether or not that helped. Back in those days there were no water stations. The whole way was filled with people cheering us on and they provided all the water we needed so thirst was never a problem. At about 15 miles my running partner, Bob Walker, with whom I trained, said I was slowing down, so he took off. Shortly thereafter I came to the famous, or maybe infamous, "Heartbreak Hill." I labored upward. Near the top I saw my girlfriend, Patti Price, standing with her other boyfriend, Dave, and both were smiling and cheering. She had come to Boston to see Dave and make up her mind whether she was going to choose me or Dave. Their seeming happiness made me feel as if I was the loser. My heart literally broke on Heartbreak Hill. I finished in a time of 3:28. At the end it had

cooled off to 87 degrees. But the best thing that Happened is that Patti chose me.

I later received a letter from the Boston Marathon committee indicating that, because of the extreme weather conditions, they had normalized our finishing times with the average temperature of all their marathons and indicated that under normal conditions my time would have been 3:06. I was happy with that.

After Boston, I had run 5 marathons in 7 months. I was improving rapidly and I was looking forward to continue running and competing.

Into every life a little rain must fall. Several months after Boston I was invited to join the Rainier Mountain Group to be the speaker on the effects of altitude on climbers at their ice climbing school on Mt. Rainier. I invited Patti to come along. We participated in all the school's activities, anticipating that we would summit the mountain on our last day. But before that day, we were to practice crevasse rescue. We had practiced how to climb up a rope beforehand. When it was my turn go down into the crevasse, my belayer said "Belay on." I replied "Belay on," and let go of the ice axe that was holding me up. "Whoosh," I was in free fall. My belayer had lost control of the rope. "Crunch," my right foot hit a projecting ice ledge. I stopped about 18 inches from the bottom. I had 2 ropes on supported by 2 guys above who broke my fall. My right knee was numb. I knew it was fractured. I was pulled up. We went down the mountain that night (another harrowing story for another time) and I had surgery in the morning.

The fracture was into the knee joint. It would be another 6 years before I would run another marathon. My right leg was now shorter and weaker. Whereas I had a mile time of 5:10 before, the best I could do after the fall was a 7:00. I only ran 4 marathons thereafter finishing with Big Sur in 1989. My best actual time was 3:13 at Tulsa before the accident.

I had always dreamed of breaking 3 hours which was the goal of many of my fellow runners. I'm sure I would have done that accept for the accident. Just before going to Rainer, I had done a 10-mile practice run in 63 minutes, a 6:18 pace. I rarely think of what I could have accomplished as a middle-aged runner. It was best to forget and look forward to other accomplishments.